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ABSTRACT

The Tillamook program provides support to learning disabled students who experience difficulty in science, social studies, and other content areas in the regular class setting, as a result of mainstreaming efforts. The program model includes a professionally staffed resource room, a diagnostic-prescriptive team, and a library of multimedia resources. In the resource room, students work on specific objectives identified in the regular class setting. With the help of a resource teacher and materials specially adapted to emphasize important concepts or written to accommodate the students' lower reading level, students receive needed assistance on concepts and skills that correspond to regular class coursework. More progress toward mastery of objectives results than would be expected if the students remained in the regular class. In an evaluation of the program spanning two years, reading achievement, verbal IQ, and self-esteem scores were consistently higher than those obtained with a control group. (JEH)

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OSSC BULLETIN

TILLAMOOK'S LEARNING DISABILITIES

PROGRAM FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

by

Maggie Johnson

OSSC Staff Writer

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PREFACE

Teachers and administrators throughout the United States have been faced with the problem of how to provide an effective and appropriate education for mildly handicapped students at the secondary level. Of foremost concern is providing classes that are difficult enough to motivate the students without frustrating them with skill requirements beyond their abilities.

In this *Bulletin* an innovative and effective program operated by Tillamook Education Service District is probed and presented for possible adaptation in other districts. The model presented is based originally on a program developed in Oklahoma and endorsed by the National Diffusion Network.

The program should be of interest to both special and general education teachers as well as administrators and board members who are confronted with the problems associated with mainstreaming students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Tom Thompson, director of special programs at Tillamook Education Service District, provided information and resource materials. Mr. Thompson was instrumental in Tillamook's adoption of the Oklahoma model. He has been at the ESD for nine years.

Three teachers were interviewed and their programs were observed. Bobbi Brice, Marilynn Gholston, and Susan Young are all Learning Center/Resource teachers at Neah-Kah-Nie High School.

Olga Esselstrom and Mike Cooley provided information about the materials center. Mike is supervisor of student services, and Olga runs the Instructional Resource Center.

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INTRODUCTION

Recent litigation and legislation, particularly the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142), have mandated that handicapped children be educated in the "least restrictive environment." Removal of a handicapped child from the regular classroom is to occur only when the nature and severity of the handicapping condition warrant it. Much of the education of mildly handicapped (learning disabled, educable mentally retarded, and so forth) students, therefore, should take place in the regular classroom with supplemental special education classes.

For secondary students, the procedure is usually to place the special student in one or two periods of remedial classes, then in regular classes for the rest of the day. Unfortunately, the student does not always carry over the skills learned in the special class when he or she attends a content area class such as science or social studies. The student may progress well in reading in a special class, but when faced with a reading task in science, cannot perform.

What is the solution to the problem of appropriate placement for the student with the knowledge and skills to participate in science experiments and group projects, but who cannot read the text or take adequate notes from lectures? Should the student be "mainstreamed" for the entire science period, including the portions that require extensive reading; or should the student be placed in a program designed to teach reading, without

"hands-on" experiences; or should the placement consist of only "hands-on" experiences, without reading, so the student is not required to put forth effort to learn?

Eventually, each of the above possibilities requires an evaluation of the student. If the student has been in the regular class situation only, the evaluation may reflect failure without regard to the amount of effort put forth by the student. If the student has worked very hard, but cannot read the material, the evaluation may not accurately reflect his or her mastery level of the course objectives. If the student's evaluation is based on a total special class placement, it may not truly reflect achievement in relation to the student's abilities.

Each of these evaluation methods may have some merit, yet each also has its drawbacks. The ideal solution to the problem of finding appropriate placements for secondary learning disabled students would seem to be a combination of programs involving the most efficient and desirable aspects of each. Tillamook Education Service District has begun the adoption of such a program developed in Cushing, Oklahoma, by the Oklahoma Child Service Demonstration Center for Secondary Students.

DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF THE PROGRAM

The Secondary Learning Disabilities project was developed by the Oklahoma Child Service Demonstration Center for Secondary Students located in Cushing, Oklahoma. A report by the Joint Dissemination Review Panel of the National Diffusion Network describes the major goal of the project as "to provide each identified learning disabled student of secondary school age within the target population, a specific prescriptive learning program which would enable each individual to develop skills and knowledge at a rate commensurate with his level of ability." According to the panel, "the model is basically a diagnostic-prescriptive teaching intervention system." The model's components include:

1. a professionally staffed resource room in each of the targeted school districts;
2. a diagnostic-prescriptive team composed of a psycho-educational evaluator and two prescriptive teachers with individual students; and
3. a library of media for use by the resource room teachers to implement the intervention strategies. This model was applied to students from grades seven through twelve, and therefore focused on aiding these students in compensatory strategies rather than remedial strategies.

Four school districts in Oklahoma were involved in the validation of the project's objectives for inclusion in the National Diffusion Network. Prior to endorsement by the NDN, programs must go through a rigorous review process. The review is conducted by the Joint Dissemination Review Panel, comprised of twenty

people from the National Institute of Education and the Office of Education. The project must have proven results showing student gain from pre- and post-test scores. Additionally, the program must be transportable for training purposes and must be cost-effective.

The evaluation of the Secondary Learning Disabilities project spanned two years. Two major objectives were evaluated: *(1) scores of project participants in comparison to a control group on verbal IQ and reading achievement, and (2) positive changes in the measured characteristics of personal and social self-esteem and interpersonal warmth.*

The evaluation results were highly positive. The program sample showed a 5.24 point gain in verbal IQ over seven months, while the control sample showed a 2.80 gain. In reading achievement, the program sample showed a 2.37 percentile increase, and the control sample showed a 2.32 percentile decrease over the twelve months between standardized achievement tests. Both sets of results were statistically significant. The evaluation of the second objective (self-concept) also resulted in a statistically significant increase in social self-esteem by the program participants.

IMPLEMENTATION AT TILLAMOOK

The Tillamook Educational Service District (ESD) began its adoption of the Oklahoma model for Secondary Learning Disabilities in August 1979 with an inservice training session conducted by Oklahoma trainers. Tillamook personnel had discovered the project when they attended an awareness workshop for National Diffusion Network projects sponsored by the Multnomah ESD. At that time Tillamook ESD was looking for a vocational program for handicapped students and also a mainstreaming model that would be effective. The Oklahoma model met both needs.

The program, now in its second year of operation in Tillamook County, is not yet fully implemented, but this year is the first year with almost total adoption.

The program was initially funded through Title IV-C grants. Additional funds have come from various other grants. The Title IV-C grant ended November 1, 1980, so the program is mostly funded through local funds, state reimbursements for special education, and Public Law 94-142 funds.

Four Tillamook County school districts are using the Oklahoma model for their mildly handicapped students in grades seven through twelve. Due to the itinerant programs established for orthopedically handicapped, hearing impaired, and visually impaired students, the extra support provided by the Oklahoma model was

not considered appropriate for those students. The Oklahoma project was originally designed for learning disabled students; however, the Tillamook ESD has expanded the program to include educable mentally retarded adolescents.

The Oklahoma model has four major components: *(1) a professionally staffed resource room, (2) diagnostic-prescriptive teaching, (3) specifically selected multimedia materials, and (4) affective development designed to ameliorate social-emotional blocks to learning.* Each of these is described below in detail.

Professionally Staffed Resource Room

Each secondary building in Tillamook County is equipped with both a learning center and a resource room. The learning centers are set up as self-contained classes for teaching basic skills in reading, math, or language arts. Students are assigned to these classes for remedial help. The resource room classes are provided during the day when students are enrolled in content area classes such as science or social studies. Students attend the classes in which they are enrolled, but when objectives are taught for which the student does not have skills (such as reading a lengthy chapter), the regular classroom teacher sends the student to the resource room for individual help. Students remain in the regular classroom for all activities requiring skills they have.

Some of the special education teachers employed by the ESD teach only learning center classes, and some teach only resource room classes. The majority, however, teach combinations of the two. For example, a teacher may teach three learning center

classes and three resource room classes, or one learning center class plus five resource room classes. Aides and CETA (Comprehensive Employment Training Act) personnel are employed to supplement the special education staff.

All four secondary buildings in the county have both learning centers and resource rooms staffed by certified special education teachers, available for their mildly handicapped students. Vocational and prevocational programs are available in some schools, and students can be transported to Tillamook if the programs are not available in their school.

Diagnostic-Prescriptive Teaching

Enrollment in both resource room and learning center classes is dependent upon eligibility as a handicapped student. The identification process is essentially the same as for any handicapped student in a public school. The initial step is the teacher referral. Upon finding that a student in the classroom is experiencing learning difficulties, the teacher sends a letter to the student's parents explaining a need to talk about their son or daughter's educational program. When the parent responds, permission is obtained for the evaluation. At that point, the classroom teacher completes a referral form, sending one copy to the ESD. The rest of the copies (there are three) are given first to the building counselor, then to the building principal, with the remaining copy being sent back to the ESD. The ESD keeps two copies so that one can be placed in the teacher's file and one in the student's.

When the referral is returned to the ESD, it is given to the evaluation staff to determine from the background information provided what additional evaluation is necessary. The evaluation is then conducted, after which the specialists arrange a multidisciplinary team meeting. The team involves the regular classroom teacher, the special education teacher who might possibly receive the student (if it can be determined), the evaluation specialist, a member of the school district (usually the building principal or counselor), and a representative of the ESD (usually one of the supervisors).

At the multidisciplinary-team meeting, it is determined what services would most likely be beneficial to the student--that is, resource room, learning center, or a combination of the two. The team looks at the secondary student's total school program, deciding if rescheduling of classes will be necessary. The group then meets to develop plans for an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Included in this pre-IEP meeting are the regular classroom teacher, the evaluation people, and the possible special services teacher. When the pre-IEP plan has been formulated, the group meets with the parents for the IEP/placement meeting. The results of the multidisciplinary-team report and the pre-IEP meeting are discussed. Parents are asked to provide input as to their views on the student's learning problems and needs. When a consensus is reached, the IEP is formally written and placement is determined based on the IEP.

Let's follow a hypothetical student through the process. The student is a seventh grader with a severe reading disability. Due to this disability the student requires some type of remediation. The alternatives include reading instruction in a learning center, reading instruction from the Title I program, or tutoring in reading. The appropriate alternative, based on the needs of the student, is determined to be instruction in the learning center.

The student's daily schedule is reviewed to determine which of the student's classes involve reading. The student is enrolled in science, history, and math. These courses involve students in taking notes from lectures, reading texts, and taking written tests in addition to experiments and projects that do not require reading or writing. This student would have little or no trouble with most aspects of the curriculum; but when the reading and writing tasks are involved, he would be at a real disadvantage. Whenever reading or writing is required in his classroom, his teacher provides the special teacher with the objectives to be mastered and specifies how much time the student should spend on the assignments and when the student is to return to the classroom. The student is then dismissed with his classroom materials and a hall pass (which gives the objectives).

In the resource room, the student works on the objectives with help from the resource teacher. The student may use materials adapted for his reading level, or taped for him to listen to.

The methods and materials used cover the same objectives as the classroom materials, but are at his level. The structured situation, without the distractions of the regular classroom, plus the instruction designed specifically for his needs, provide the opportunity for the student to make more progress toward mastery of the objectives than would occur if he remained in the regular class without the special help.

The classroom teachers have learned techniques for reducing the reading level of the textbooks and materials they are using. They sometimes will tape their lectures for the student to listen to in the resource room with the special teacher assisting. Adjustments are often made in the methods for evaluation of the students--such as oral tests instead of written.

Data on students' progress are obtained from standardized tests used as pre-tests and post-tests. Tillamook personnel, in conjunction with the Oklahoma staff, are constructing written language and composition tests also. These will be field tested in counties other than Tillamook for comparative data to standardize as language tests.

Specifically Selected Multimedia Materials

The Tillamook ESD maintains a materials resource center for the regular and special education teachers in the county. Teachers may check out materials from the center, or they may special order materials specific to objectives being taught in the classroom. Among the materials available are color-coded textbooks, tape

recorded materials, and teaching calculators. Commercial materials for secondary content areas such as science and social studies are available, but written at a lower reading level. These materials are adapted or appropriate materials are developed for use in the classroom with mildly handicapped students.

Color coding texts is one of the common adaptations performed by the materials center staff. Major concepts, important dates, and answers to study questions are highlighted in different colors to assist the student in determining the most important parts of the reading assignment--the parts she/he should pay careful attention to. The materials center staff either does the color-coding for the classroom teacher or assists the teacher in the method.

Another task often performed by the materials center staff is taping materials for students. The material is analyzed for content, then an easier script is written. The easier script is recorded for the student, who listens to it while following highlighted portions of the text.

The materials center is complemented by a reproduction unit capable of producing black copy rather than dittoed material, which can be a real frustration to a learning disabled student.

A materials catalog is also available from the Oklahoma Child Service Demonstration Center that lists materials that have been field tested and found useful in working with learning disabled students in secondary schools. Many of the materials are available to the teachers in Tillamook County through their materials resource center.

Affective Development

Coping skills are a main focus of the Tillamook ESD, providing appropriate education for mildly handicapped secondary students. In addition to remediation of disabilities, the student learns to find alternative ways of obtaining information. Teachers are provided several approaches to the learning disabled student and are given alternative materials that are effective.

Paying attention and keeping quiet are classroom rules taught in the learning center which carry over into the resource room. The students find that these conduct rules work to help them learn. The students have begun to realize that they can also use the same techniques in the regular classroom to learn more. Some students have started moving to a quiet corner of the classroom when they need to study.

CONTINUING PROGRAM EVALUATION

The Tillamook ESD has established various avenues for insuring the successful operation of this program. Among these are two advisory committees.

An advisory committee has been established specifically for the model adopted from the Oklahoma project. This committee includes both learning center and resource center teachers as well as classroom teachers. Needs and concerns of all persons involved in the program are addressed and remedies for problems are discussed.

Thus, everyone involved has an opportunity to make others aware of problems and to find solutions before the problems escalate.

There is also an ESD advisory committee, which includes parents. Although the purpose of this committee is to make recommendations for the total special services program, several of the parents are aware of the secondary program for learning disabled students; therefore, these parents also are able to make recommendations for its improvement.

In addition to the external evaluation methods outlined above, the district also maintains data on students enrolled in the program, using standardized tests as pre- and post-tests. The overall growth of students during the first year of the program in the basic skills of math and reading was almost two years--1.6 in reading, 1.7 in math. Before the program was instituted, less than one year's growth was being made for one year of instruction in the secondary learning centers. Some student's raw scores were as much as 245 percent higher than their pre-test scores.

ADOPTION PROCEDURES

Districts that might want to investigate the possibility of adopting the Oklahoma model are encouraged to contact Dick Pedee, the state facilitator for NDN projects. The state facilitator is responsible for linking districts with programs that have been

nationally validated for the NDN. It is generally easier for a number of districts to join in a combined effort for adoption of a nationally validated project.

If districts would like to observe Tillamook's program prior to contacting Dick Pedee, they should contact Tom Thompson. He will set up an observation in the schools using the Oklahoma model.

Districts that seriously want to adopt the Oklahoma model, but do not have the money, may apply for an ESEA Title IV-C adoption grant through the Oregon Department of Education. Chuck Nelson is the contact person. If districts contact him, he will send them a copy of "Proposal Guidelines for Adoption." Districts are to be cautioned that they must be acquainted enough with the project to know they are going to adopt it before they apply. The grants are intended for initial training for one year. After the year, districts are expected to fully fund the project themselves. It should be noted that if districts have enough money to adopt the project on their own, there is no need to apply for a Title IV-C grant. Districts do not need to have a grant in order to adopt an NDN project.

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